



Minnie Sue Coleman, "Pig in a Pen" Medallion, c. 1970

Gee's Bend Quilts

In celebration of Black History Month, we are creating art inspired by a group of crafters from Gee's Bend, Alabama and their famous Gee's Bend Quilts. Gee's Bend (Boykin, Alabama) is a rural community southwest of Selma and has become known for the abstract quilts made by generations of Black women there since the 1800s. These quilts were made with whatever scraps of fabric they could find such as clothes or aprons. Quilts were made out of necessity for warmth, for enjoyment, and even for memories by using their loved one's clothes. Join us as we make a variation of these quilts using found paper and fabric scraps. This activity is a great way to explore a variety of textures, colors, and patterns.

1



Gather materials:

- Cardstock (2 Sheets)
- Fabric Scraps (clothes, jeans, dish towels, etc.)
- Colored Paper Scraps (wrapping paper, construction paper, etc.)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Tape

2



Tape two pieces of cardstock paper together to create a large gluing surface for your quilt. Place the two pages side by side and attach them using a long piece of tape.

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3



Cut the fabric and paper into strips and various shapes. We will also be cutting as we piece the materials together so start with large basic sizes. Cut some long and some wide.

4



For your quilt, start by arranging a few larger pieces along the edges of the page. Have each piece be different in color, material, and size.

5



Use smaller pieces and piece together rectangles and squares using the strips of fabric or paper. Part of what makes Gee's Bends quilts so unique is that they are not completely even, so it's okay if you cut crooked pieces or if they overlap. The more uneven the better in this project!

6



Continue adding different strips to your quilt. Begin filling in empty spaces. Place the material you'd like to use next to the empty space and cut a similar size piece. Remember we do not want to use a ruler to measure the exact size. "Eyeballing" the measurement will give us the trademark Gee's Bend look.



7



To add balance to your quilt, place similar colors and sizes evenly throughout the quilt. For example, the deep pink pieces are evenly placed around the quilt even though they are in different directions. Adding two green pieces on each side also adds balance and unity.

8



Once all the larger pieces are put in and the balance is created, you can fit in any smaller pieces you would like and create a design of horizontal and vertical strips.

PRO-TIP:

Save any small pieces you have from cutting the larger shapes. You may need them to fill small uneven slots later.

9



Add the final pieces until the entire surface is covered. Like Tetris or a puzzle, all pieces should fit together. Then you are done with your quilt!

